



County of Los Angeles CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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DAVID E. JANSSEN
Chief Administrative Officer

October 22, 2002

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

Board of Supervisors

GLORIA MOLINA
First District

YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

OPEN MEETING PROPOSALS (ITEM NO. 32, AGENDA OF OCTOBER 22, 2002)

The Board has taken numerous actions this year to further open the government process to make it easier for members of the public to understand and be aware of actions that may impact them. At its July 16, 2002 meeting, the Board instructed my office to review proposals that had been implemented regarding open meetings, assess how the policies are working and suggest if any changes are necessary. An individual review of those policies follows.

Departments were instructed to post their communications to the Board of Supervisors on their websites and make them available to the public at a designated area. We continue to work with the departments to fully implement this Board directive. While many departments have complied fully, others have yet to post their documents, post only some of the documents or do not post them on a timely basis. Several small departments say they do not have technical knowledge to post their documents online.

There have been some complaints from the public, press and Board offices, as well, that it is not easy to find documents that are online because departments do not post them in a uniform place nor have a common heading. One department may label the documents "Board Communication," another "Board Reports," another "Press Releases," another "Public Records," while one splits them up into at least three different categories. This lack of uniformity can be confusing and frustrating to the public.

A project near completion is intended to correct many of these deficiencies. The Internal Services Department and the Chief Information Office have designed a centralized website for posting the reports which will make it easier for the public to locate documents and simplify the posting process for departments. Users will be able to search for documents by subject, date or department. A standardized heading will be placed on each department website to direct users to the centralized site. A hotlink will also be placed on the Public Records section of the County's homepage. ISD is currently training departments how to submit documents, and the website will be available to the public November 1, 2002. ISD assures there should be no technical issues to prevent any department from submitting its documents for inclusion on the site.

Openmeetingupdate



Also, my office will be more vigilant in ensuring that departments fully comply with the Board order requiring posting of documents once the centralized site is available. I will be sending a memo to the departments reminding them of the importance of complying with this directive.

In regards to the directive that departments designate a location in which these records may be viewed by the public, those locations are detailed on the County's "Public Records" website.

The Board instructed that meetings attended by three or more Board deputies were to be conducted in accordance with provisions of the Brown Act when matters to be discussed were calendared or expected to be calendared on the agenda for action by the Board within 30 days. The staff of the chair of the Board of Supervisors has been responsible for ensuring agendas for these meetings have been prepared and posted, and that the meetings are conducted in accordance with the Brown Act. We are unaware of any problems or complaints since this practice was implemented.

The Board instructed that its policy manual be posted on the County website. The manual, formerly available only to County employees on the Intranet, is now available to the public on the Board of Supervisors website under "Resource Center."

The Board adopted a Countywide protocol to ensure departments appropriately respond to Public Records requests. This policy, as requested by the Board, has been posted on the County's website. As part of the policy, departments were asked to place on their website information to identify to whom requests for public records should be directed. Not all departments have complied with this directive. We will follow up with these departments to see that they are in compliance. Absent complaints, we assume the public is not encountering difficulties in getting copies of public documents.

The Board requested official transcripts of Board meetings and corresponding video segments be posted on the Internet within 24 hours. This website has been developed and is in the test mode. Your offices will be contacted for feedback within the next several weeks. The site will be available to the public December 15, 2002. The project will allow a person to review the transcript, watch the corresponding video if they wish, or search the transcript by topic. All transcripts will be certified for accuracy by a court reporter. The transcripts and videos will be archived, providing a valuable historical record and research tool. I would recommend three programming modifications to this project at this time to better serve the public and make the records more accessible: providing the audio of the meetings in Spanish, making the site functional for MacIntosh and Netscape users, and linking directly from the Statement of Proceedings to specific video segments that appear within the drop-down menu in the official transcript. The one-time charge for these modifications would be \$7,500, \$9,000 and \$7,500 respectively, to be financed through the Cable Fund.

The Board requested a closed-captioning reader board be placed in the supervisors' hearing room to accommodate hearing-impaired individuals. This display board, to be

located on the east side of the hearing room, will be operational by November 15, 2002. It will allow the public to view the closed-captioning that up to this time has only been displayed on the telecast. Since it is being typed as the Board, staff and public speak, some spelling errors and omissions can be expected, but this will be kept to a minimum since it is being prepared by an outside firm specializing in closed-captioning.

The Board asked that a flat-screen monitor be installed in the lobby to allow those not in the Board room to view the proceedings. The monitor, which will be of particular benefit to overflow crowds, those waiting to go through security check, parents and caregivers, became operational October 8, 2002.

The Board asked that a video feed be installed in the Board room and in the area in front of the main entrance of the building to allow live media broadcasts of the meetings. The feed has been installed and is in test mode. It will be available to the media November 15, 2002.

Supervisors asked that the telecast of the meetings show how they voted on non-consent agenda items. This project is being delayed pending a digital upgrade to the broadcast control room, which we expect to move forward on in several months.

Supervisors instructed the Executive Office to post on the County's website all documents that are part of the official transmittal of any Board agenda item as soon as they are available, including departmental backup materials. The Executive Office reports that any items it receives from the departments by Tuesday morning are scanned into the system and appear on the agenda. Reports submitted during the Board meeting are scanned and made part of the final minute order, which can later be accessed through the Statement of Proceedings. To make this process more efficient, the Executive Office suggests that departments e-mail all agenda-related correspondence to the agenda preparation section "submit" mailbox, which is currently used for sending Board letters. I would concur with this recommendation.

At this time, we would recommend that the Board take several other actions that it has previously discussed. Specifically, we propose the adoption of two amendments prepared by County Counsel at the Board's direction that would change policy relating to meeting procedures. We think these actions would be beneficial to the public and staff.

- A. Report the roll call vote of each non-consent agenda item after it is taken, calling out the agenda number and identifying Board members who cast ayes, nays and abstentions.
- B. Require the announcement of actions taken during closed-door sessions, not only in the Statement of Proceedings, but also on the next Board agenda.

The roll call would end some of the confusion that now exists, due particularly to the acoustical problems and activity in the Board room. Staff and audience members at times are not sure whether an item has passed, and what the vote was. The closed-door

notification is intended to better inform the public, press and staff of Board actions taken after the regular session has ended. Though the executive officer returns to the Board room to announce actions taken at the closed sessions, few are present to hear the announcement. Even those who have a Board speaker in their office often miss the announcement since they may be away from their desk at the time. The votes are reported in the Statement of Proceedings, but the statement normally is not completed until 10 days later.

County Counsel and the Chief Administrative Office already have taken several actions to provide the public with more information on the agenda regarding closed session items dealing with labor relations and litigation. We plan to continue with this effort by including a brief description of the nature of the items being considered in closed session, when appropriate (anticipated litigation, for example, would not be disclosed in advance). Immediately following closed sessions, the County Counsel will provide to the executive officer and the public affairs director a written description in layman's terms of the case under discussion and reportable actions taken by the Board. Not only will this information be read into the record by the executive officer, it will become part of the official transcript that will soon be on the Internet and will be displayed on the closed-circuit television system at the Hall of Administration (which is also accessible on the Internet). Should the Board adopt Recommendation B, it will also be included in the agenda of the next Board meeting.

Much has been accomplished in the past few months to fulfill the Board's goal of opening up the government process to allow the public to better understand and participate in decision-making. We will continue to focus on ensuring that the directives given by the Board are fully enacted. We will continue to work with the departments to better serve the public and welcome any suggestions on additional ways in which to accomplish that mission.

DEJ:GK
JH

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel